

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Implications

In this chapter, we briefly recap some of the key findings of the study, discuss their implications for transportation policy and outline several questions that have arisen as an outgrowth of our research. The study focused on part-time workers and their journey to work, particularly with regard to automobile usage. In general, close similarities in automobile access were found for part-time workers and full-time workers. However, within specific segments of the part-time workforce significant issues of transportation access arose, and with them, implications for policy formulation.

Several issues regarding part-time work identified in the literature were confirmed by findings from our study. While the data did not allow us to differentiate between voluntary and involuntary part-time workers, our study confirmed that women dominate the part-time workforce. In addition to women, the part-time workforce is largely made up of seniors, the elderly, and teenagers.

The services industry was identified in the literature as the job sector with the fastest growing number of part-time workers. Our study found that a fifth of all part-time workers are in this sector, compared to only eight percent of full-time workers who work in the service sector. It also confirmed earlier findings that income among this group of workers was also among the lowest. Across all levels of personal income black part-time workers represent the largest proportion of part-time workers living in households with no automobile.

On average, travel time for part-time workers was shorter than for full-time workers. However, unmarried women with children took slightly longer to get to work than other part-time

workers. The literature shows that teenagers have been identified as having limited access to transportation, constraining their job search. We also found that this is true, since a larger proportion of teenagers than others walk to work, suggesting that they choose part-time jobs that may be relatively close to their residences.

Women

The most significant differences among women in transportation access were reflected in their racial, marital and family status. A much lower proportion of black female part-time workers travel to work by automobile compared to other part-time workers. Married women seemed to have better access to transportation, while unmarried women with children were at the greatest disadvantage. Single mothers averaged a longer commute than any other segment of the female workforce. Among the female part-time workforce, single mothers were also the group most likely to travel by public transit. In 1990, there were 817,212 unmarried women with children working part-time. Unmarried black female part-time workers with children were found to be using the automobile at a much lower proportion than other female part-time workers. In addition, women in lower skilled and lower paying occupations are more likely to travel at non-standard hours. This raises several important issues that nevertheless were beyond the scope of this study. Some of the women making Welfare to Work transitions may have a lot in common with these single mothers. Further understanding of this group will help inform transportation policy decisions that, in the long run, may help determine the success of welfare reform efforts.

Several questions remain to be addressed. For example, to what extent are those who might be affected by the new Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) welfare program, going to have to face similar transportation barriers? How do they cope with child care and

transportation in their journey to work?

Seniors and the Elderly

This segment of the part-time workforce is an important one as people live longer and continue to be physically fit to work even after retirement from full-time jobs. From our study, we know that these part-time workers demonstrate worktrip behavior and have transportation access similar to the rest of the population. The literature review differentiated between “retained” part-time and secondary part-time jobs. For senior and elderly part-time workers, they seem to be retained part-time workers to a greater extent, as measured by their presence in high wage jobs compared to other workers. However, many issues worth further investigation are emerging as this population grows. For example, what transportation differences exist between male and female seniors? To what extent is the travel behavior of these workers affected by physical disabilities? What is the impact of information technology on the ability of these workers to work from their homes?

Teenagers

The majority of teenagers combined part-time work and school attendance. Not surprisingly, they exhibited a unique tendency to depart for work after 12 noon. Teenagers were also more likely to walk to work, indicating that they worked closer to home. We cannot tell from the study the extent to which teenagers’ job search or work location is impacted by their access to automobiles. Since teenagers can learn valuable skills as part-time workers, it is important to ask the following questions. To what extent does a teen’s access to transportation affect his or her ability to find suitable jobs? What differences in access exist between teenagers of different income levels and racial backgrounds? Further investigation of these questions could reveal

valuable information for transportation policy.

Policy Implications

The most significant policy implication derived from this study is the need to make automobiles more accessible to workers who otherwise have limited access to private vehicles because of non-standard hours and possible trip-chaining. For workers living in households with no automobile, carpooling can be a useful worktrip strategy. Nevertheless, our study showed that only 6 percent of part-time workers who carpool to work live in households with no private vehicles.

When people plan effective carpooling, it is necessary that their departure times be concentrated around the same time of day. For full-time workers this kind of coordination is clearly far simpler than for part-time workers, given the more widely dispersed departure times part-timers experience. One solution might be to encourage employers to support carpooling by their employees. Also, community-based organizations could be encouraged to develop some form of transportation plan targeted at part-time workers with limited access to automobiles. More recently, car dealers around the country have been making donations of used cars to workers without cars, to assist them in their transportation needs. The federal government may want to explore ways of encouraging these initiatives or coordinating their programs with activities such as these.